



CDiSS COMMENTARY

National Defence University Malaysia (NDUM)
Centre for Defence and International Security Studies (CDiSS)

cdisscommentary.upnm.edu.my

No. 5 - 16 January 2018

CDiSS NDUM Commentary is a platform to provide timely and, where appropriate, policy-relevant commentary and analysis of topical issues and contemporary developments. CDiSS commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. These commentaries may be reproduced electronically or in print with prior permission from CDiSS and due recognition to the author(s) and CDiSS. To contribute article and provide comment or feedback, please email the Editor at bahamzah8@hotmail.com

THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF SOLDIERING IN THE COMPLEX OPERATING ENVIRONMENT LANDSCAPE

By
Inderjit Singh

SYNOPSIS

Due to increasing complexities coupled with rapid state of the art technological advancements, future soldier technology envisage a different operational environment in the future but without the consideration and understanding of the capabilities of our soldiers both physically and mentally which will ultimately limit the effectiveness of both the technologies and our soldiers. This paper describes the human dimension of soldier and states that the Army concepts acknowledge the soldier as the centerpiece of the Army, but none, individually or collectively, adequately addresses the human dimension of future operations.

For centuries past and likely for centuries to come, military leaders have debated the qualities desired in a soldier. What are the expectations of the qualities of soldier especially as we move in to the digital era of battle in the complex operating environment landscape (COE)? It is easy to find that nearly every prominent military leader and researcher has advocated the importance of attributes such as courage, integrity, perseverance, intelligence, loyalty and self-confidence.

The human dimension of soldiering meets the complex operational environment which exists today and in the near future. Soldiers need to be mentally prepared to perform well on operations. But there is little agreement on how commanders can best prepare the individual soldier and the unit for deployment. The military cannot afford to focus only on current operations as a predictor of

the future. It must prepare soldiers so that future commanders can sustain operations in a time of persistent conflict.

The human dimension is based on professional mastery and mission command, and requires high standards of training, education, doctrine, organization, and leadership¹. The dimension is about the way people collaborate to share their awareness of the situation, so that they can fight more effectively. This emphasis has evolved from the increasingly complex and diverse operating environments in which soldiers perform, and the increased demands and stresses that are unique to current conflict (e.g., small-unit conflicts and asymmetrical warfare). Furthermore, due to these increasing complexities coupled with rapid technological advancements, the development of the very technologies aimed at supporting the military mission without the consideration and understanding of the capabilities of our soldiers will ultimately limit the effectiveness of both the technologies and the soldiers. The military leverages enhancement system is to identify, access, retain, and develop soldiers with unsurpassed cognitive, physical, and social (moral and cultural) capabilities². Soldiers are enabled by technology, cognitive, medical and social sciences to achieve excellence in small unit competence and to dominate increasingly complex operational environments. Soldiers are able to leverage technologies and processes that optimize and restore cognitive and physical performance.

“Human are self-aware social mammals generally possessing the ability to reason, speak and use complex tools in complex environment to achieve an objective”. Then we have the human trained to be soldiers who kills without care or remorse, shows no fear, can fight battle after battle without fatigue and generally behave more like a machine than a man? “A soldier is a man or woman who selflessly devotes their life to ensure that all citizens of their country can sleep with peace of mind and live out day to day without fear. A soldier gives you your freedom, and asks nothing in return”.

THE COMPLEX OPERATING ENVIRONMENT LANDSCAPE

The operational environment is a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of military forces and bear on the decisions of the unit commander. The complex operational environment (COE) is the overall operational environment that exists today and in the near future, with the range of threats during this period extends from smaller, lower-technology opponents using more adaptive, asymmetric methods to larger, modernized forces able to engage forces in more conventional, symmetrical ways. In some possible conflicts (or in multiple, concurrent conflicts), a combination of these types of threats could be especially problematic. The current operating environment will continue to evolve, presenting ground forces in the future with an ever increasing challenge to defeat irregular and

¹ Australian Department of Defence. (ADF) (2002) *Force 2020*. Australian Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT.

² Army Capabilities Integration Center, US Army Training and Doctrine Command. North Carolina A&T State University. 2009 ICCRTS, Washington, DC, June 15-17

hybrid enemies that are connected by cell phone, computer network and satellite phone technology. The future complex operating environment will include adversaries ranging from well-led, well-trained and well-equipped conventional military formations experienced in close fighting to irregular and hybrid forces. The current operating environment will continue to evolve, presenting ground forces in the future with an ever increasing challenge to defeat irregular and hybrid enemies that are connected by cell phone, computer network and satellite phone technology.

Our most likely opponents will continue to be irregular forces, extending from trained insurgents focused on local or regional regime change or global jihad to criminals and tribal groups focused on maintaining power within their local areas for economic reasons. In some cases these enemies will work together, forming a hybrid threat that combines conventional and unconventional units, equipment and tactics. Regardless of makeup or aim, however, the enemy will continue to be adaptive and networked, employing a range of weapons and technologies along with conventional and improvised weapons.

At the same time, the information age has dramatically expanded people's access to knowledge and information. These phenomena in shrinking resources, growing populations, ubiquitous access to real-time information to interact and merge to create a global relative deprivation. Collectively, these trends in the domestic and worldwide OE will affect the military's most critical resource, the soldier. These trends include social and cultural factors; the dynamics of geopolitics and governance; the globalization of economics and resources; the revolution in science, technology, and engineering; and, global climate change³. Social media such as facebook, twitter has paved the way for open communications especially the Y generation soldiers in speaking openly on all matters. Climate change has the potential to result in multiple chronic conditions occurring globally intensifying the causes of instability and persistent conflict. Demographic and economic pressures multiply as world population grows and the distribution of wealth and resources change⁴.

Across the world everyone is facing several challenging, dangerous, and potentially inescapable geo-strategic trends. These trends include social and cultural factors; the dynamics of geopolitics and governance; the globalization of economics and resources; the revolution in science, technology, and engineering; and, global climate change. The integration of human dimension of soldiers into the COE will provide a major challenge for all militaries especially as it creates ambiguity, danger, physical exertion, friction, and constitute the climate of war, which contributes to the fog of war with which commanders must contend in future operations.

The machine is just a tool for the soldier in battlefield and the tactics is the method but overall the soldier is the platform using all his training in cognitive reasoning in making significant decisions in the battlefield whereby

³ The U.S. Army Functional Concept for Movement and Maneuver 2016-2028

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009). ["World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision."](#) Highlights. Retrieved on: 2009-04-06.

the machine an method is just the psychomotor aspect in assisting him meet his goals. At such what would the emphasis be for the future COE in relation to the human dimensions of soldiers especially the Y generation soldiers? How will Armed Forces deal with such changing environment and technological advancements to ensure the human dimension in soldiers continue to uphold the warrior spirit? Maybe the future training and education for individual and collective training for soldiers need to be relooked and seek new avenues in terms of the push and pull factor for soldiers? The solution probably will be derived from how best we recruit, train, and retain our forces including the package of training methods of which soldiers can operate across the spectrum and range of military operations in the future operational requirements.

Lt Col Dr Inderjit Singh (Retired) is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Human Resources and Defence Management in the National Defence University of Malaysia.

CENTRE FOR DEFENCE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES (CDiSS)

National Defence University of Malaysia

Sungai Besi Camp, 57000 Kuala Lumpur

Phone: (+603) 9051 3400 ext. 4618

Fax: (+603) 9051 3031

E-mail: cdiss@upnm.edu.my